

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: November 12, 2015

Agenda Item: 2016 Proposed Fishing Regulations

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 60 Minutes

Background

The fishing regulation process is based on a four-year cycle. Prior to the first year of every cycle (such as 2016), FWP embarks on a thorough review of its fishing regulations. As part of this review, staff is directed to propose ways to simplify and standardize regulations, within individual water bodies, regions, or statewide. The public is also solicited for ideas on how to standardize and simplify, as well as other regulation changes they may wish to see adopted.

Public Involvement Process & Results

In August, 71 proposed fishing regulation changes for 2016 were approved for public comment by the Fish & Wildlife Commission, initiating a 30-day public comment period that was originally scheduled to run through Sept. 9. The comment period was later extended at public request through Oct. 3. During the comment period, FWP received 1,152 comments, 415 via an online survey that also produced 4,010 selections characterizing respondents' opinion on the various proposals as Support, Oppose, or No Opinion, and 548 others electronically, by mail, or by handwritten note. Fourteen FWP-sponsored open houses were held around the state also soliciting comment. Based on a review of these comments, and after consultation with the F&W Commission, FWP staff have modified four of the regulation proposals and incorporated these changes into the 2016 regulation recommendations. FWP recommends that two of the proposals be entirely withdrawn.

Alternatives and Analysis

The 2016 final regulation recommendations list each proposal individually, and indicate if they are a change or deletion of an existing regulation, or if they create a new regulation. New language is indicated in colored italics; old language to be deleted is indicated with a strikethrough. Included with each recommendation is a summary of comments received during the public comment period. Each proposal also includes the rationale for its recommendation, after consideration of public comment.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

A total of 71 recommended regulation actions are proposed. Many are meant to standardize or otherwise simplify regulations, mostly by deleting unneeded exceptions for fish size, harvest limits, or seasons on specific water bodies. After considering public comment, four proposals have been modified from their original form, and two are now recommended to be entirely withdrawn. Specific language for modified proposals was decided after consultation with the F&W Commission. Many additional proposals came from public comments that were not included with the 2016 regulation recommendations. These ideas have been forwarded to FWP regional staff and retained in Helena for consideration at a future time.

Proposed Motion

I move to adopt FWP's proposed regulation changes for the 2016-2019 fishing seasons. (Motions may be made separately for each of the Western, Central and Eastern Fishing Districts).